

Rights And Duties

I JHP

Text: I John 2; 15-17

"We hold these truths to be self evident: That all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights: that among these are life liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

This is what the Declaration of Independence states. These things are to be guaranteed by our form of government. Most of them have been guaranteed and carried out down through the years. One in particular that has not, has been in the area of civil rights. As a result of this we have had a rash of civil rights laws, and civil rights movements, and all sorts of civil rights demonstrations. Much of this ^{was} has and is needed. However as in all things some of it has been carried too far. In any area of our society today, all a black man needs to say is that his civil rights have been violated and there is much action taken to solve it whether the man has a legitimate complaint or not. Most of the time action is taken and many times it appears as though it is done in fear instead of trying to right a wrong. The criminal element cries, "My constitutional rights have been violated and in many cases he uses this excuse to seek a new trial or to stall the whole judicial procedure altogether. Students demonstrate against what they claim is unfair practices at our universities and colleges. Their claim their freedom of speech is in jeopardy. That they have no say so in the government of the university and therefore their rights are being violated. Young men openly defy the authorities in evading the draft. Some have even fled to Canada to escape the service. Their claim is that the government has no right to draft them. Everywhere you go you hear about rights. On almost any newscast you will hear about rights somewhere being violated or questioned, or being picketed or demonstrated against. You can read it in any newspaper. Yet for all of this talk and action about rights, there is another word that goes along with the word

rights and this is the word, "Duty." Along with each right goes the responsibility of duty. Along with each privilege, goes the obligation of duty. In any walk of life, in any realm of Society, you cannot have rights without the responsibility of duty. They go together, and are inseparable.

Where would our nation be today if our forfathers had sat back after declaring that we had a right to separate from England? If they had not accepted the duty of following through with the strength of their convictions? Where would our nation be today had most of the men drafted in world War I refused to serve because it violated their rights? Where would our nation be had the men of the second World War redused to serve and ditto for the Korean War and yes, even the conflict in Viet Nam? We would have been overrun a long time ago by some foreign government, that's where we would be. No one likes to fight a war. No one wants to sacrifice his life for a cause that sometimes may not appear quite clear. Yet it is one of the duties that goes along with citizenship in this wonderful country. Yes, I said wonderful country, because it is. No one can go out of this country into another and upon his return not feel that we are indeed the most fortunate of people. Those of you who fought in either of the two World Wars knows pretty much first hand what the tyranny and oppression of a people who think they are superior to anyone else can do. Those of you who fought in Korea know what Communism is and the dangers it entails. I happen to be a veteran of that conflict, and during my stay there I helped guard the prisoners on Koje island. We guarded them for six weeks before we went back to the front. This was considered as a sort of rest, for the units up front. It was set up on a schedule and each unit was relieved by another unit and then they spent six weeks guarding these prisoners. After we were there for a few weeks we began to wonder just who the prisoners were. It seemed sometimes as though it were we. I have never seen human beings act like animals in my life as they did there. These people were so fanatical that they followed ~~everyxxardxummmetinngly~~ unquestioningly every word that was spoken by their superiors. They held bayonet practice with brooms and mops in the compounds. They marched and chanted and jeered at us. And periodically they tried to escape by hurling a human wave of bodies against the gate, only to be mowed down by machine guns. And each succeeding wave would climb

on the pile of bodies thus being that much higher up on the fence to try to climb over. This to me is what Communism is. If each one of us could witness this type of human behaviour I feel certain that we would all resist Communism with every fibre of our beings. But do we? No, we don't. We have thousands of men burning draft cards and refusing to serve their country. They claim it is their right, and I say they are cowards. I would wager that there aren't too many of you men sitting here who did not have some form of apprehension about being in the service. But you went and you served, because you felt it was your duty. I can understand someone not serving because of religious scruples, but still serving in another capacity. But it really bugs me to see these other cowards just disobeying because they feel it is their right. Abraham Lincoln said in his Gettysberg Address, something to the effect that, "These dead shall not have died in vain," and it has often made me think of all of those fellows who stayed behind in Korea. Many of them were friends and buddies. It almost seems as though their sacrifice to free ~~our~~ ^{the} land and ~~the~~ world ~~of~~ of tyranny was useless. I suppose many of you have felt the same way when you think back to your friends and buddies who have sacrificed their very all in the cause of peace, ^{when you} ~~will~~ see the events taking place around you.

The author of 1st John wrote, "You must not love this passing world or anything that is in the world. The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world." Now this does not mean that we cannot accept our duties as citizens of our country. It does not mean that we cannot love our country. It does mean that as citizens of this great nation founded upon the belief in God, that we must resist and continue to resist the evils that are present in the world and all around us. Christ Himself told his followers that they had to be subject to the rules and regulations needed to govern the people. But He cautioned them to give to Caesar the things that belonged to him and to God the things of God. We know that we must have laws and rules and regulations for the good of the people. However this does not mean that we need to knuckle under to crime and tyranny wherever it is found. ^{It} ~~This~~ is our duty as citizens of these United States, ^{to RESIST EVIL} and it is also our duty as believers in God.

We sing many hymns about our country, such as, America, America The Beautiful, and God of Our Fathers, but there is one hymn which I ran across at I have never sung. And its words are all too true. It goes like this; "God help our country to be strong 'gainst all the battlehosts of wrong; In all we pledge or think or do God help our country to be true. God hold our nations aim sincere, God save her heart from coward fear, God prosper her with true success, and crown her head with worthiness. From foe without and foe within, From open shame and hidden sin, From boastful pride and greedy store, God keep our nation evermore."

This should be the prayer of each of us on this Memorial Sunday 1969. Let us each serve our God as we should, and let us each serve our nation as we should. Accepting not only the rights that are ours as Americans, but also accepting each of the duties that ~~xxxxxx~~ fall to each of us because we are Americans. Let us pray.